

What is claimed is:

1. A centralized medical image management system comprising:

5 client terminals installed in medical facilities and an image database server, the client terminals enabling transmission and reception of sets of medical image data together with accompanying information regarding the sets of medical image data via a public communications network; and

10 the image database server having functions of receiving the sets of medical image data and the accompanying information transmitted from the client terminals via the public communications network, storing the sets of medical image data and the accompanying information that have been received, searching for a desired one of the sets of medical image data stored therein by using the accompanying information, and transmitting the set of medical image data, wherein,

15 by an input of a desired search condition using a portion of the accompanying information from any one of the client terminals to the image database server, the image database server searches for the set of medical image data corresponding to the search condition and transmits the set of medical image data to the client terminal.

20 2. A centralized medical image management system as defined in Claim 1, the image database server comparing a password input from any one of the client terminals with a password stored in advance, searching for the set of medical image data

corresponding to the accompanying information input as the search condition from the client terminal if the passwords match up, and transmitting the set of medical image data to the client terminal.

5           3. A centralized medical image management system as defined in Claim 1 or 2, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising patient specification information, the date of photographing, a photographing menu, an input modality, and facility information.

10           4. A centralized medical image management system as defined in Claim 1, wherein the accompanying information includes a combination of facility information and patient specification information.

15           5. A centralized medical image management system as defined in Claim 2, wherein the accompanying information includes a combination of facility information and patient specification information.

20           6. A centralized medical image management system as defined in Claim 3, wherein the accompanying information includes a combination of the facility information and the patient specification information.

25           7. A centralized medical image management system as defined in Claim 1, wherein the accompanying information includes patient specification information encrypted by the medical facilities.

8. A centralized medical image management system as

defined in Claim 2, wherein the accompanying information includes patient specification information encrypted by the medical facilities.

9. A centralized medical image management system as defined in Claim 3, wherein the patient specification information is encrypted by the medical facilities.

10. A centralized medical image management system as defined in Claim 4, wherein the patient specification information is encrypted by the medical facilities.

11. The image database server used in the centralized medical image management system defined in Claim 1, the image database server having the functions of receiving the sets of medical image data together with the accompanying information transmitted from the client terminals via the public communications network, storing the sets of medical image data and the accompanying information, searching for the desired one of the sets of medical image data stored therein by using the accompanying information, and transmitting the set of medical image data.

12. The image database server as defined in Claim 11, further having functions of receiving a password, comparing the password with a password stored therein in advance, and searching for the desired one of the sets of medical image data stored therein by using the accompanying information if the passwords match up.

13. The client terminal used in the centralized medical image management system defined in Claim 1, the client terminal

comprising:

data transmission means for transmitting the sets of the medical image data and the accompanying information regarding the sets of medical image data to the image database server via the public communications network;

search condition transmission means for transmitting the search condition using the accompanying information used for searching for the desired one of the sets of the medical image data stored in the image database server; and

image data reception means for receiving the set of the medical image data corresponding to the search condition.

14. The client terminal as defined in Claim 13, further comprising password transmission means for transmitting a password to the image database server.

15. A computer-readable recording medium storing a program to cause a computer to execute the procedures of:

transmitting sets of medical image data together with accompanying information regarding the sets of the medical image data to an image database server via a public communications network;

transmitting a search condition using the accompanying information used for searching for a desired one of the sets of the medical image data stored in the image database server; and

receiving the set of the medical image data corresponding to the search condition.

16. A centralized medical image management method

comprising the steps of:

installing, in medical facilities, client terminals enabling transmission and reception of sets of medical image data together with accompanying information regarding the sets of the medical image data via a public communications network;

transmitting the sets of medical image data and the accompanying information via the public communications network from the client terminals to an image database server installed separately from the medical facilities;

storing the sets of medical image data and the accompanying information in the image database server;

inputting a desired search condition using a portion of the accompanying information from any one of the client terminals to the image database server; and

searching the image database server for a desired one of the sets of medical image data corresponding to the accompanying information based on the search condition, and transmitting the set of medical image data from the image database server to the client terminal.